

County of Santa Cruz Health Services Agency SSP Summary Points

- The County Health Services Agency has serious concern for the subject of improper discard of syringes in public places. We acknowledge and appreciate those who share the same concern and have made their concerns known to us.
- The County Health Services Agency takes these issues seriously.
- Over the last 18 months, the County has taken control of the syringe exchange program and has rigorously documented the distribution and importantly, the collection of syringes.
- For those who have not had a chance to view these reports, please check out the posted reports on the Agency website. For those who are familiar with the reports, the data shows the large number of syringes that have been collected. These numbers are far and above the number of syringes distributed.
- It is mandated by the federal and state government that County Health Services Agency (HSA) provide public health services to prevent and control the spread of communicable diseases.
- Syringe exchange programs are a "best practice" public health intervention and the Syringe Services Program (SSP) for Santa Cruz County is authorized by the State and the County Board of Supervisors as a tool to assist with fulfilling the mandate for the County to prevent and control the spread of communicable diseases.
- We have a vested interest not only professionally but deeply personal as well to ensure public health and public safety for our community. To that end, here is what we are doing about the problem:
 - ✓ The County has worked with concerned neighbors, community groups and governmental agencies on issues regarding used syringes and our Board has discussed the issue several times over the last year. In June, the Board voted to institute a collection program at pharmacies in the unincorporated areas of the county.
 - ✓ Working with other County departments and City jurisdictions to participate in community clean ups
 - ✓ Providing Injection Drug Users with clean syringes on a one to one (1:1) exchange with medical exceptions in order to control the spread of HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C and to keep discarded syringes out of public places
 - ✓ Referring and linking people to drug treatment and other needed services
 - ✓ Maintaining three public kiosks for syringe disposal
 - ✓ Increasing security services for Emeline neighborhood
 - ✓ Working collaboratively with the City of Santa Cruz, law enforcement and other stakeholders to ensure public safety for residents
 - ✓ Convening and maintaining a countywide Advisory Group to advise HSA on syringe exchange services
 - ✓ Providing periodic reports accounting for syringe exchange utilization data, cost and demographics of clientele
 - ✓ Reducing SSP operation hours at Emeline campus from 18.5 hours to 10 hours per week
 - ✓ Revising the SSP Policy and Procedures to reflect the need to notify the Board of Supervisors if 1:1 exchanges exceeded 3% of syringes collected in any quarter of the year; the practice of capping the number of sterile syringes given to clients to 100 per visit for primary exchange; and continue to educate and encourage clients to properly dispose of used syringes
 - ✓ Conducting Countywide substance use disorders strategic planning to bring findings and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors in the Fall of 2014 for increasing access to substance use disorder treatment for the clients
 - ✓ Planning a Public Health Forum in the Winter of 2014 to outreach, provide education and listen to the community on public health issues
- We are a responsible partner in the effort to reduce improper disposal of syringes in our community and are part of the solution.
- We appreciate public input and feedback for continuous quality improvement of our public health programs.

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